In addition, the following steps are taken by coal companies to prevent illegal mining:— *

(i) Rat holes created by illegal mining are being dozed off and filled up with stone and debris wherever possible.

(ii) Concrete walls have been created on the mouth of the abandoned mines to prevent access and illegal activities in these areas.

(iii) Fencing is being constructed at the various illegal mining sites along with displaying of signboards mentioning "Dangerous and Prohibited Place".

(iv) Dumping of the overburden is being done on the outcrop zones which are not required to be mined.

(v) Collection of intelligence reports about illegal coal depots and illegal movement of coal and informing district authorities of the same for taking preventive action.

(vi) Installation of check-posts at vulnerable points to check transport documents.

(vii) Training of existing security personnel, refresher training of CISF personnel and basic training of new recruits in security discipline for strengthening the security set up.

(viii) The coal companies maintain dose liasion with the State authorities.

Open cast coal mines

3051. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the PRIME **MINISTER** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the increasing number of open cast coal mines in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government have framed any rules and regulations in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) There.are no rules and regulations framed by the Government regarding increasing or decreasing the number of open cast mines. Mines are being opened to bridge the gap between demand and supply. The mine type i.e. under ground or opencast is determined considering the techno-economic and geo-mining condition of the coal deposit proposed for exploitation. The operation of opencast mines are governed by the existing provisions in Mines Act and other rules and regulations there under.

Merger of MTNL and BSNL

3052. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal of merger of MTNL and BSNL is under consideration of Government;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor in view of consolidation taking place in the sector;

(c) if so, by when and the issues which have yet not been resolved; and

(d) by when Governmenfare likely to finalize its view on the issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (d) Sir, the Government is examining several options (including merger) for restructuring MTNL and BSNL. Many complex issues relating to HR, differential wage structure in the two PSUs, stamp duty implications etc. are involved in this exercise. The Government will finalize its views only after making careful analysis of the cost involved vis-a-vis benefits of restructuring.

Quality of telecom services in Orissa

3053. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India's wireless base would cross 40 crore by 2010;.